

**Oral History Interview with
Jerry Voorhis**

Cal Poly Pomona University Library

Jerry Voorhis Summary

Jerry Voorhis (Horace Jeremiah Voorhis, 1901-1984) was the headmaster of the Voorhis School for Boys, founded by his father, Nash Motor Company executive Charles Voorhis, in 1928. The Voorhis School was located in San Dimas, California and provided an education and room and board to underprivileged boys. The younger Voorhis had developed an interest in education while a student at Yale University and later went on to earn a master's degree in education from the Claremont Graduate School.

Voorhis ran for Congress at the urging of his friends and, to his surprise, was elected representative of California's 12th congressional district in 1936. He was unable to continue as headmaster of the Voorhis School while serving in Congress and in 1938 his father decided to close the school and donate the campus to the California State Polytechnic College (Cal Poly).

The Voorhis Campus became the southern satellite of the main Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo and was known as the Voorhis Unit. A second southern campus, the Kellogg Campus in Pomona, opened in 1956. For a time, the two campuses were known as the "Kellogg-Voorhis Campus." All instruction moved to the Kellogg campus in 1956, while students continued to live on the Voorhis campus. In 1966, the southern campus formally separated from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo to form Cal Poly Pomona. Cal Poly Pomona eventually sold the Voorhis land to Pacific Coast Bible College in 1977 and the land is now the site of the Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation.

Jerry Voorhis served in the House of Representatives until he was defeated by a young Richard Nixon in 1948. Afterwards, he became involved with the Cooperative League of America, serving as its executive director and president. He retired from those positions in 1967. Voorhis also wrote multiple books during his time in Congress and afterward, including *Beyond Victory*; *American Cooperatives: Where They Come From, What They Do, Where They are Going*; *The Strange Case of Richard Milhous Nixon*; and *The Life and Times of Aurelius Lyman Voorhis*.

Subject Headings

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
Voorhis, Jerry
Voorhis School for Boys

Legal Statement

All uses of this manuscript are covered by a legal agreement between Cal Poly Pomona and the interviewee. The manuscript is thereby made available for research purposes. All library rights in the manuscript, including the right to publish, are reserved to the Cal Poly Pomona Library.

Requests for permission to quote for publication should be addressed to the Cal Poly Pomona Library and should include identification of the specific passages to be quoted, anticipated use of passages, and identification of the user.

Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction	1
Origins of the Voorhis School for Boys	2
The Students	3
Life at Voorhis	5
The Campus and Faculty	7
Living Arrangements and Operations	8
Career in Politics	10
Transfer of the Voorhis Campus to Cal Poly	11
Conclusion	14

Jerry Voorhis

July 1972

*Interview conducted by John Brooks
Transcribed by Lorecel Gravino*

JB: The formation and growth of California Polytechnic University at the Kellogg-Voorhis campus is rich with dedicated people, who had sought to better our educational standards, facilities, and teaching methods. This report concerns just such a dedicated person.

The cost of higher education has been financed through various means including school bonds, taxes, and private contributions. The family of Jerry Voorhis generously donated the site of their Voorhis School for Boys in San Dimas, which became the southern branch of the California Polytechnic College at San Luis Obispo. From this foundation has grown the Kellogg-Voorhis campus of the California Polytechnic University at Pomona.

Throughout his life, Jerry Voorhis has successfully involved himself in the betterment of his fellow man. His various activities include being headmaster of the Voorhis School for Boys, representing the people of the 12th district in the United States Congress, from 1936 to 1946, and serving as the executive director of the Cooperative League of the United States of America. Mr. Voorhis is currently retired in Claremont with his wife, where he is actively involved in the Democratic Party and continue personal appearances and work in the Cooperative League.

His son, Jerry L. [Livingston] Voorhis is a professor of history at the Cal Poly University in Pomona. Mr. Voorhis, how was your life influenced by your father?

JV: He was a great dad as far as I was concerned—as long as I can remember. And of course at the end, he was the one who made it possible for us to have the Voorhis School for Boys because out of his work that he's done through his life, he financed that school and endowed it and built the buildings. I mean paid for the building of the buildings, so that I owed everything to him from that point of view.

He also was very loyal to me when I was running for office and helped me during that time, so I owe an unlimited debt to my father.

JB: What events and experiences, during your days at Yale University are most remembered?

JV: Well my answer to that question, John, will be perhaps a little bit surprising. I wasn't a great social success, as you might say at Yale. I didn't make the best fraternities or anything like that. But I was president of the Christian Association in my senior year and I was deeply interested in religious matters. While I was there, I used to go down to the Yale Hope Mission which was a

little mission establishment for homeless men, and I'd talk to them and I'd give them talks about history and things like that and I got to know a lot of them.

And then I taught English to a bunch of people from Poland who'd basically come there to New Haven. And I had some real good friends and we organized a political club and engaged in debates and wrote articles about it for the *Yale Daily News* and things like this.

JB: What were the circumstances leading to the formation of the Voorhis School for Boys?

JV: That could be rather long story, but I'll try to abbreviate it. I wanted from early college days to be a schoolteacher and I did become one. My first school teaching job was at a place called Allendale Farm in Illinois. Which was a home and a school for homeless boys, not unlike the Voorhis School later was. And we worked there for a year. I taught school and worked with the athletic teams and worked on the farm and did all kinds of things.

Then the bishop, the Episcopal bishop of Wyoming who was a friend of our family actually, and had married my mother and father, wanted to open a home for orphan boys in Wyoming and he asked me to come out there and start it. Which I did, and we got it going and had 40 boys there with us and one building for a year.

At that point my father, proposed that he'd like to establish a school for homeless boys in California and want to know if I'd come out and take charge of the school. And I said, of course, that I would. And so, we made a couple of trips out.

In the meantime, my father and mother selected this site, bought the land, 150 acres were it now is, from Mr. Johnstone, who was then the civil service commissioner of the state of California, and president of the local bank and a prominent citizen in San Dimas. So that's really in very brief form, the story of how the school got started.

JB: Was there any connection or relationship between the Drake Cottage Home for Boys in Wyoming and the Voorhis School in San Dimas, California?

JV: Yes, there was, and I'd explained the part of that relationship already but there was something else. Because there were boys there that nobody really wanted, and I thought they were good kids. And so, a number of them came out here with us when we came to Claremont and rented a big house on the corner of 2nd and College on the Pomona College. And those boys, we had nine of them all together, they were with us for one year here in Claremont and formed a kind of a nucleus for the Voorhis School of Boys. That was the year I got my master's degree of education at Claremont Graduate School. And of course, I've gotten some experience at Drake Cottage too, which was valuable.

JB: What qualities and specification were you seeking when you chose the site of the school?

JV: Well, we wanted first of all, to have a piece of land where we could develop some agriculture and where the boys could have that experience and also where we could help support ourselves from the agriculture. We wanted to be reasonably isolated, not that we wanted to withdraw from any community, but we didn't want to be a bother to close neighbors if we could help it. And we also wanted a place that was interesting where there were a lot of natural resources to study for the boys. And of course, we got a rather ideal place from all these different points of view.

JB: What position did you hold in the school and what were your duties?

JV: Well this could take a long time. I was called the Headmaster and I had overall responsibility for it. Along with some of our other teachers, I used to conduct some of the chapel services. I was a lay reader in the Episcopal Church. I was in charge of the gardens—the vegetable gardens—and worked with the boys on those. And I also was in charge of the chickens and the rabbits that we raised.

I taught social sciences in the school and coached baseball and basketball. We had a good many athletic teams and generally was in charge of the place. I used to—of course I had lots to do with the college matters and with life of the boys with their college homes and that was generally, I think is a good brief description as I can give.

JB: What was the admission policy for the selection of boys to attend the school?

JV: That is a good question. I would say that we had three criteria. First of all—that they needed—that they needed a home, and they needed opportunity for an education and to grow up in a happy way. Secondly, we took boys who had not, not necessarily outstanding ability, but generally average ability, or better. We didn't take boys who were mentally retarded, is what I'm trying to say. Although I took one boy, who I remembered tested an IQ of 60, when he first came, but he'd never been to school. And then another year he tested 90, which [threw] some light on the IQ test, I think.

Then we did not make it as school of correction. By that I mean we didn't make a plan on taking boys who'd been in trouble. I felt that there were a lot of places that paid attention to those boys and not very many that tried to make a home and a school that they'd be proud of for the kid who just was disadvantaged, but who had the good judgment to stay out of trouble. So that those were the three things that we looked at. Of course, we looked over pretty carefully the applications and in general with all other things being equal, we'd take the boys whose needs seemed to be the greatest.

JB: Will you comment on the present accomplishment and status of some of your former students?

JV: Oh, here again I could go on for a long, long time. I'll just do it as quick as I can. For examples, for example one of the boys has had a very good plumbing business, down in the coastal areas and he's retired now and does a great deal of good with his own family and with his money. Another one of them is the mayor of El Monte right now. He and two of his brothers went to our school.

Another one of them has had a very rough life, actually. He was a musician, he played the saxophone beautifully at the school, but after he got out of the school he and his wife didn't get along and he had a rough time kind of bumming around. And he'd show up wherever I was, once in a while, and let me know what he was doing which wasn't very good. He has been sick recently. He was a veteran and he's been in the veterans' hospital. He's now out of that hospital and he and three other fellows formed a cooperative to sell musical instruments. So, he's getting along better now. But I tell you this story just to show that we didn't have a complete success with every one of the fellows, but they do fall back very well even though they've been in trouble.

Another one of them who was my secretary while I was in Congress, is one of the very best secretaries any congressman ever had. I'm sure of that. Now has a very responsible job with Boise Cascade Construction company as one of their supervisors.

Another one of our fellows has been for about 27 years, working for the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, in charge of the surplus food distribution program.

Another one is a young Japanese fellow; he was a young Japanese fellow. He owned his own barbershop up in Minneapolis, has a fine family, his son won a scholarship.

Another one a Mexican-American fellow who was for years on the Los Angeles police force. He and his wife had eight children, then he worked for one of the tire companies and he just retired from that.

Another one, also a Mexican-American boy, has worked for the U.S. Post Office for long enough so that he's about to be able to retire.

Another one of my fellows is a professor of geology at USC [University of Southern California]. His brother is a printer and works a job printing shop down at El Toro. Another one of the fellows that I brought from Wyoming with me, for example, has turned out to be one of our best baseball players and he now drives a beer truck. His brother works in a supermarket.

Another one of them was head of the Coordinating Council in El Monte and he now has his own special construction company, that belongs to him. Another one is a colonel in the Army and also a judge of the Industrial Accident Commission of the state of California. And his brother is a policeman in San Francisco and has been rated the best juvenile policeman in the history of San Francisco or something to that effect.

Well, I could go on and on and on, but this is enough.

JB: How influential do you feel the training of the Voorhis School was on these boys?

JV: Well, I can't answer that without seeming to brag, I'm afraid, but they have said that it was very influential. I have lots of letters from them and lots of things they've said that the school is really a turning point for them and that they wouldn't take a very great deal for their experience while they were there.

JB: Can you describe what took place on a typical school day on the Voorhis campus?

JV: Well I'll try. We got up pretty early and many times we'd have exercises out by the flagpole. One of the first things that was done was the boys who were in charge of it, would raise the flag, then we'd have breakfast. All the meals took place in dining rooms that were around the patio there by the kitchen and each cottage group of boys ate together with their cottage mothers. And I would sometimes, at breakfast time if I didn't eat with my own family, I'd go to one of the cottages and eat with them.

And then right after breakfast we had chores of different kinds and we fed the chickens and the rabbits, and the fellows went back to the cottages to straighten up their rooms and did that kind of work. All this happened before 8:00 o'clock because school start at 8. And we had school from 8 to 12 and 1 to 3. That was the school time and I won't go into detail about that.

Right after school close at 3:00 o'clock, we had a work period every afternoon of an hour and a half. And that was when the boys did their part of the farm work, working in the print shop and the auto shop, the machine shop, and elsewhere like that and even in the office.

And then at half past four, we had athletics and practice for the teams and all that. And then at 6:00 o'clock we have supper. And three nights a week after supper we had a chapel service. And then the boys would study and go back to their cottages and go to bed. Once in a while we'd have a lecturer come up to talk to us and the things of that kind. But that was a typical, typical day what I just did talk about.

JB: What normally took place on the weekends?

JV: On weekends, we worked all Saturday morning and we played all Saturday afternoon. Or, roughly speaking, we'd have athletics on Saturday afternoon, but I might say that athletics weren't compulsory. There were lots of things the fellows could do. If they want to go out and chase butterflies for the museum, they could. If they didn't happen to be good athletes, they didn't have to pretend to be. And they could go swimming, of course, because the swimming pool was OK. And they could go on hikes and they could do what they wanted.

On Sundays we had chapel and then we'd have our Sunday dinner, and in the afternoon, we'd usually play and have athletics. But as the school got going a lot of the alumni would always come back on weekends. So, we had a good time with them and more and more of them would come back until we finally devoted one whole building to what we call an alumni house. And our music teacher, Mrs. Nelson was in charge of that alumni house and took care of the fellows when they came back.

JB: What was simple sacrifice meant?

JV: Well, the fellows were, had a very deep religious interest really and humanitarian interests and a lot of them felt that they were getting advantages that they ought to pass on to other people. They were interested in the Gandhi movement in India and other things like that and in some of the labor conditions in our own country. And so, one thing that some of them did and this again was a voluntary matter, was a go without breakfast on Sunday morning. And then we'd figure out how much that breakfast would have cost the school, and we put that money in a fund and the fellows would decide what to do with it. A lot of it went to Mahatma Gandhi, actually.

Then there were other times when we have what we call a simple meal at night, which meant that we just have milk and cereal maybe. And try to figure out how much that would save, don't you see, and we'd put it on the same kind of fund.

JB: How were the holidays celebrated at your school?

JV: Christmas was one of the main ones, we also celebrated Memorial Day, and Armistice Day, and the 4th of July and so on. On the 4th of July we'd have some of our fellows that, teachers maybe that had been in the Army or the Navy, to talk on Armistice Day. We did that. On the 4th of July we'd read some of the historic documents.

But on Christmas, we had more than any other time. Some of our people wrote a Christmas pageant which we always gave in the chapel every year. And then I adapted Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* to a play, and we gave that every year. And then sometimes we'd go off and sing carols in hospitals. I imagine it must have sounded pretty bad but anyway the boys liked to do that.

And then the next morning we'd have such Christmas presents as people gave to one another, these didn't amount to awfully much. Then we'd plant the Christmas trees. We've always bought live trees and a lot of the evergreens that are up there were planted from Christmas trees that we had in the early days.

I don't know if you'd call Good Friday a holiday, but it was in a way, for us. We always have the three hours service and we have seven different members of the faculty usually, who would speak about the seven stations to the cross. Well, this is roughly what we do.

JB: Would you elaborate on the Voorhis School facilities, and the classrooms, land, building, shops, and other features of the campus?

JV: Yes, well as you know most of the buildings were built on a mesa at the top of the hill. We left the lower part of the property, down by the creek, we left that for agricultural purposes. And we built all the buildings on the mesa. Well, there was our administration building, where the offices were and where for a long time our family lived on the upper floor. And then there was the kitchen and dining rooms all around the patio, which was adjacent to that.

And in the same general group of buildings was the schoolhouse and the library. We had meetings in the library as well as reading. And we had enough classrooms to take care of the different types of education that we offered, which were roughly the junior high school years. Then we had a big reservoir, primarily for irrigation, but also partly for swimming.

We had a good carpenter shop. We had a good machine shop, I think. We had a print shop. Some of our fellows are still printing, having learned the trade there. And of course, the center, very largely the center of our school life was in many ways the chapel, which had a plate glass window behind the altar and the cross which looked out on framed, Mt. Baldy. And in the wintertime, when there was snow on Baldy, it was very beautiful.

We had many acres of citrus planted and some avocados. And walnuts and peaches, and then our gardens are vegetable gardens. We had a good athletic field and the rest of it was wild. And a good place for specimens—natural specimens—to be collected, which we put into our school museum.

JB: What classes were taught at the school?

JV: Well, I'm going just do this very briefly, John. We taught the 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th grade and we had—I think—a rather a rich curriculum, because we could use the natural environment of the school for this. In the summertime, we'd have an altogether voluntary curriculum. The fellows could take almost anything they wanted. We'd have things like nature study and music and art and natural science and things like this, or whatever they wanted to do. But generally speaking, we taught the regular courses that were necessary for junior high school.

And then the older boys went to high school at Bonita High School when they got to the 10th grade and it was therefore from Bonita that they graduated.

JB: Who were some of the members of your staff?

JV: Well, I won't try to describe all of them, one of them was named [Hibbard Pruitt?] who had gone to Pomona College. I had known him a little bit there, he had his own dairy down at Chino and I went down there to see him. I'd heard him very well spoken of and asked him if he'd come and be our agriculture teacher, and in charge of our agriculture and he accepted.

Another one was Reverend Herbert Tay, who was taking graduate work in education at the same time I was, at Pomona College. And he came over and was our, one of our finest teachers, and did a great deal of conducting of our chapel services and coached athletics and did a lot of other things. And he still comes to our alumni meetings and he's very active with our alumni.

Another one was a lady named Mrs. Dorsey. We had a number of cottage mothers during that time that we were there. One of them, Miss Mary Foster, was never very well in health, but she was there the whole time of the school and her boys just loved her. But Mrs. Dorsey was a very capable lady, who not only took care of her 12 boys in her cottage, but also taught school and gave most of our arithmetic work.

And there was a man named Demetrius Stellano, who was from Cyprus. And a fine professor at Cornell College in Iowa, Dr. Steiner, who was an authority on American immigration, wrote me a letter one time and told me about Demetrius. Wanting to know if we'd get him a job. Well I didn't know what quite this would result in, but he did come. Was a diminutive, little man, he fitted in very well, he taught the younger boys mostly. It was good success, afterwards he went down to Santa Ana, established a school for retarded children. Became later, president of the school board for Orange County, believe it or not. And these were just examples of our faculty.

JB: Can you comment on other persons influential to the Voorhis School?

JV: Well, we did have a lot of good friends in the community, our doctor for instance, Dr. Thomason, and people that we traded with in San Dimas. And we did all of our purchasing locally from the local merchants in town. There were professors at Pomona College and at the Claremont Colleges, that were quite close to us, used to come and talk to the boys at times. But mostly it was a family effort, really. My father and mother were members of the board and then we'd have one or two other people. Mr. Johnstone served on the board, but we only had five trustees. We always hoped that some other people would get interested in the school and would help out financially. But generally speaking, no one ever did, and this was one reason why we finally had to give the school away.

JB: What living arrangements existed for the boys and staff at the Voorhis campus?

JV: Well, the boys had all lived in cottages and with a cottage mother in whom we hoped would be with them most of the time they were there. That didn't always workout, because some of them got sick and other things happened, so we have to have a new cottage mother. But their arrangement generally was these 12 boys would constitute a family with their cottage mother and they ate together and lived together. And occasionally I'd have to move a boy from one cottage to another because they just didn't get along either with other boys or with the cottage mother and she had trouble with him, so I'd have to move him. But generally speaking, that didn't happen very often.

The faculty mostly had their own small homes and that is the teachers, aside from the cottage mothers, that was about it.

JB: Where on the campus did your family reside Mr. Voorhis?

JV: Well at first, when we first went over there, in the summer of 1928 some of the buildings weren't yet built, including the administration building. So, we only had a few cottages and one of those cottages our family lived in with a number of boys. I forget how many we had with us in that house but about seven or eight, as I judge. Then when the rest of the buildings were built, we moved over and we lived upstairs over the offices of the central administration building. We lived there for several years and then after a while that was needed for other purposes and for other people so we moved to a little cottage that had been occupied by another faculty family and we lived there for a few years. And then after the school was closed and given to Cal Poly, we went and lived in what had been the Alumni House which is the larger house just at the top of the hill.

JB: Did the Voorhis School provide the total educational needs of its students and where any other facilities used?

JV: Well of course other facilities were important. During the junior high school years, we did most of the job, but after that, as I've said, I think, the boys went to Bonita High School and we had a wonderful relationship with the faculty at Bonita High School. Dr. George Bell was the principal and they had teachers that were very interested in our fellows. And our fellows would play on some of the Bonita athletic teams and we had a good relationship. Then when they graduated from Bonita, we'd also have a commencement at our school at the same time. And when they had finished high school then they graduated and either went on to college as some of them did or else they went and tried to find a job.

JB: What relationships existed between the Voorhis School and the surrounding community?

JV: For one thing all kinds of people came up and got married in our chapel. This pleased us and we were glad to have this happen. Another thing, people would come and visit on Sunday from the community and sometimes attend our chapel. And we'd always invite people up on Christmas for the various plays and things that I've told about. Oh, we did have good relationship with the local businesses because we patronize them and gave them a good deal of business, I think. And so, I would say that our relations were quite good.

And we were interested in all kinds of social problems when I was active during all those years in trying to help correct some of the things that I thought were wrong with our economic problems. But that was more or less beside the point as far as the school was concerned.

JB: How was the school financed and what was the cost of its upkeep and its running?

JV: The school was financed in two ways. In the first place, for some of the boys, something was paid to us. For example, if we took a boy from the county, they'd pay us \$25 a month, which of course didn't even begin to take care of the expense, but they did pay that. Then, maybe a boy would have one parent, either a father or a mother who's still living, but it was important for them to have the boy in the school and they might pay something.

But the main source of income was from the endowment that my dad had provided. And of course, the unfortunate thing about that was that that endowment had been set up in 1928, when its value was very much more than it was after the collapse of 1929. At which point the value of the endowment and the income from it decreased quite drastically and that present us with a continuing financial problem. So that each year we were running behind in having plenty of capital to keep going to some extent, anyway.

JB: What prompted your interest in politics?

JV: Well I would say the same thing that keeps me interested in it, but saw what I thought was a lot of injustice going on, I wanted our country to be nearly ideal as it should be and live up to its ideals. I didn't see how it was possible to justify telling great numbers of people that they had to be out of work that the society didn't have need for them.

And I saw this happening to some of the fellows that had been to our school. They were well equipped, I knew they were. They were skillful mechanics a lot of them and the fellows have ability and yet they couldn't find worthwhile work. Well this seemed to me to be wrong and I saw farmers being ruined also by the economic conditions and so on and so forth.

Anyway, I had been taking social science for a long time both at our school and at Pomona College and I don't know I kind of got the feeling, well you've been talking about this for a long time bub, now maybe you better try to do something.

So, I must confess, I was persuaded by friends and other people to try to run for office and I did. But I think those are kind of the roots of it.

JB: How did your election to the Congress alter your association to the Voorhis School?

JV: Well, I was foolish enough to think that even if I were elected—which I didn't expect to be—but even if I were elected that I could carry on at school the same time that I did my work at the Congress. Well, it didn't take me more than 20 minutes to find out that this was going to be impossible. It was impossible. I had to be in Washington when Congress was in session and during those years it was in session most of the time. So, the burdens fell on other people and this wasn't right. We carried on for two more years, and then our finances going downhill as much as they were, and I'd been gone away, was that was what we thought about the gift of the school to Cal Poly, really.

I was sorry for this and if—I think, I think probably if I had foreseen how getting elected to Congress was going to cut me off from really being able to function at the school, I doubt if I would have run for it. But I did and the rest of it is history.

JB: While in Congress, did you find your experience as headmaster of the Voorhis School valuable?

JV: Well, I was thankful for the experience. And I had two fine helpers in my office in Congress, both of whom were fellows that had grown up at our school. But maybe in one respect it wasn't so good because sometimes, the members of Congress used to tell me that I talked to them too much like a schoolteacher. And perhaps that was true, I don't know.

I believe that any experience that anyone has is valuable to him in whatever else they do. I'm sure that the things that I have learned about our country's history and about its economics when I was teaching those things, they were valuable equipment for my work in Congress.

JB: Following your congressional service did you ever think of reopening the Voorhis School or a similar school for boys?

JV: Yes, I did and I would like to have done that. There was one insurmountable obstacle and that was money. We just didn't have the means of doing that and the next place I had gotten a job with the Cooperative League which I wanted very much. Because while I'd been in Congress, I'd come to believe very strongly that there are a lot of things that the government couldn't do. And that the very important element of our national life needs to be a self-help element. Where the average person and people with problems would get together and solve those problems by the ownership of their own businesses and enterprises.

So, I was glad to get the job with the Cooperative League, and once I had it, I didn't feel like quitting it. Consequently, there wasn't really opportunities to try start another school even if I'd had the resources, which I certainly didn't.

JB: What brought about the donation of the Voorhis campus to the state of California, and which persons were influential in this transaction?

JV: Well, let me do the last part of that first. The two people that were it, who really did it were my dad and Julian McPhee, who was then president of Cal Poly. I've already told I think the reasons for the donation and the background of it. We wanted the campus to be continuously used for the kind of service to people that we had tried to carry on at the Voorhis School.

And as I've said before my election to Congress, plus the fact that our endowment had decreased were the two main reasons, although we could have carried on for a number more years. And I'd always well, believed that if I had brains enough not to get involved in politics, that we could have kept on indefinitely because I think we could have found ways.

But in any case, my father tried to give it to a number of churches and none of them felt that they could handle it right then. And then he and Mr. McPhee got together, and it wasn't very long after that, that the deed was made by our family to Cal Poly. For the southern campus of Cal Poly as it then was going to be.

JB: In the deeding of the Voorhis School, were conditions were made to the state?

JV: Well, the deed and the gift conditions were, that the school should forever be used, the property should forever be used for educational purposes. And that it couldn't be alienated for any other purpose than that. This wasn't narrowly defined it didn't say it had to be used for the education for any certain age group of people. But that it had to be used for educational purposes. That was the one condition that was laid down.

JB: Why were you so strongly interested in the land being used for educational purposes?

JV: Well that had been what my mother and father gave the money for. That was what they had in mind and I felt to be true to their memory and purposes, it had to be that way. Also, we'd had a very rewarding experience educating a group of boys there and we wanted it to stay that way. The property was ideally developed for an educational institution and I couldn't bring myself to think of it as being devoted to some commercial purpose or something different than an educational institution.

JB: Can you comment on the utilization of the Voorhis facility since the state and Cal Poly were given the campus? And how effectively do you feel the Voorhis campus has been used?

JV: Well in the beginning when it was first Cal Poly's property, we felt very fine about it because it was the southern program of Cal Poly that was conducted there, and the place was buzzing with activity. There were lots of students there and the agriculture was being fully developed and used and it was a fine place we felt then for the teaching of subtropical agriculture.

Perhaps not as big as anywhere near as big as it is now, of course, it's [at] the Pomona campus, but still a very good place. And during the years when the whole Cal Poly program was at the Voorhis campus, we thought this was just fine. Then later as the Pomona campus began to be developed of course more and more of the activities from the Voorhis campus were shifted to Pomona. Later it was used as a Conference Center and I thought that was kind of cutting the condition a little bit close. But there were lots of teachers' conferences and conferences of public employees, and I guess some church conferences. And I thought they were altogether good. I didn't feel quite so good about conferences of employees of companies that were producing weapons of war, but that didn't happen any too often. And so, we didn't feel too badly about that but then when Kellogg West was built, then of course the Conference Center was moved away and for almost a year the Voorhis campus lay almost idle.

Now, I want to say this next thing with the greatest emphasis, this was known for all Cal Poly's. Cal Poly appointed a committee, a wonderful committee, headed I believe by Dr. [Robert] Maurer, to develop a plan for the use of the Voorhis campus. And they came up with a plan for innovative education on the Voorhis campus. And I studied that with great care, one of the finest educational projects I've ever read.

In a word—as I understand it—now I expect that the members of the committee would squirm a little bit to have me say this. But what that meant to me was that it was kind of a head start program for students of a real evident ability who had been disadvantaged in their educational opportunity and would have brought them up to the point where they could have competed equally with other students in a normal college course. And I thought this was an excellent use and the only reason of course, that it wasn't done was because Cal Poly couldn't get the money out of Sacramento to do it. And therefore, they had to resort to the idea of leasing it, which now they have done, of course to the Baptist College [Pacific Coast Baptist Bible College].

JB: What relationship existed between President McPhee and yourself?

JV: Well, on the whole this was a very fine relationship. I'd admired President McPhee very sincerely and we got along very well. There were some rough spots though I have to admit. For example, it made me quite angry when they let the place be used for the making of moving picture [*The Sandpiper*] with [Richard] Burton and Elizabeth Taylor in it. And some of the things that happened during that time, I didn't like a little bit. But Mr. McPhee apparently didn't even know that that was happening at that time and that was straightened out.

I also was sorry when they began to move off the student housing and I protested about that, which perhaps I didn't have any business to do, but the students appealed to me and I did. But on the whole, Mr. McPhee was an exceedingly dynamic man, I mean and one who was able to get pretty near what he went after under almost any circumstances and I admired that and we got along on the whole very well.

JB: In parting, Mr. Voorhis do you have any plans now that you're in retirement?

JV: Well John, I don't know whether you call them plans or not. I don't have any major project if that's what you mean. The reason is I've got so darn many minor ones. For one thing, it's now possible for me to keep up very close contact with the alumni from our school. They still have their alumni association. We still have our reunions here and there and many of them up at the camp in the mountains. The fellows from our school, our alumni association, has given over the use of that camp to the Boys Club of San Gabriel Valley, which is a Boys Club with about 1500 members down in El Monte. I'm on the board of that Boys Club and I enjoy that work very much, then I also am doing what church work I can.

I'm on the vestry of our local church and I work with the Pomona Valley Council of Churches, which I think is one of the best Council of Churches I've ever seen. I'm still on the board of a number of co-op organizations including the Cooperative League and the Mutual Ownership Development Foundation here in California which devotes cooperative housing projects. And the Cooperative Foundation on the Group Health Association of America. And I'm on the board of the Federation of California Consumers and I do everything I can for the Democrats, as I guess everybody knows. I try to speak to them when I'm asked and I try to maintain a close [relationship] with some colleges here, whenever I'm asked to do so.

I am on the Claremont City Housing Task Force and I'm a member of the Claremont Civic Association and I'm legislative chairman of the American Association of Retired Persons with the Pomona Valley. And all these things take a certain amount of time. [Unintelligible]...I do some writing.

I have written a couple of books lately, one of which is published, the other one I don't know whether it will be or not, but I hope it will. I write a column regularly for the Cooperative News Service. And so as you can see, these aren't exactly plans, they're just different things that I am still interested in that I've many of them I've done for a long period of time and still keeping on as a volunteer.

Of course, our family life is one that is deeply interesting to me and we spend a little more time with that than we used to because we now can. I think that's about it.

JB: Thank you Mr. Voorhis for sharing your experiences in this tape interview.

In conclusion, I would like to say that Jerry Voorhis has dedicated himself to the task of improving the quality of life for all Americans. He has in one lifetime combined several successful careers, as headmaster of the Voorhis School for Boys he worked to provide a rewarding home and school environment for underprivileged boys.

Jerry's inspiration and example promoted a successful life pattern for those boys to follow. In Congress, he served the people of Southern California through hard work and his Christian principles. He was voted the Most Honest Man in the House by the Washington news correspondents. After a highly productive 10 years in Congress, Jerry turned his efforts to working for the Cooperative League of the United States of America. Again, he embarked on a career of service to his fellow man showing that people can live together the cooperative way.

As a member of the progressive New Deal Congresses and continuous worker for the underprivileged, he was labeled a liberal. Arthur Calderwood, in his book, *The Careers of Jerry Voorhis* said,

Liberals everywhere share a common theme. That thinking man in a free government by reasoning together will be able to advance programs that promote the welfare of

mankind. Great leaders appear from time to time, and through their leadership many issues are clarified and revised. To some few in each period of history, is given the capacity to serve with distinction in separate fields, thus achieving a series of distinguished careers.

Benjamin Franklin, for example was famous as a journalist, inventor, diplomat, and statesman. Albert Schweitzer carved an outstanding career in medicine, in writing and in music.

Such a one is the subject of these sketches. Jerry Voorhis of California. As headmaster of The Voorhis School for Boys, as a powerful voice in a New Deal Congress of 1936-1946. And finally, as Executive Secretary of the Cooperative League of the U.S.A., Voorhis served with selfless dedication throughout each career.

In his final address as Executive Director of the Cooperative League of the U.S.A., Mr. Voorhis said, "The principal business of all mankind today, is peace". It would not be too much to say that this scholar, idealist, friend of youth and militant peace advocate, is one of America's greatest. Jerry's words and actions would constantly remind us that good government, cooperative living & education is a winning combination for obtaining the democratic ideals of this country.

Mr. Voorhis, in the 1936 commencement address to the boys at his school, challenged them by saying, "The world is not waiting for you with open arms. You must make it want you. The test of your leadership in the world will be your willingness to make sacrifices for others. Seek not mastery over men but means of serving them better."

End of interview

Index

	<u>Page Number</u>
Allendale Farm	2
American Association of Retired Persons with the Pomona Valley	14
Bell, George	8
Bonita High School	7
Boys Club of San Gabriel Valley	13
Burton, Richard	13
Calderwood, Arthur	14
<i>A Christmas Carol</i>	6
Claremont City Housing Task Force	14
Claremont Civic Association	14
Claremont Graduate School	2
Cooperative Foundation on the Group Health Association of America	14
Cooperative League	1, 11, 14-15
Democratic Party	1, 14
Dorsey, Mrs.	8
Drake Cottage Home for Boys	2
Federation of California Consumers	14
Foster, Mary	8
Franklin, Benjamin	15
Gandhi, Mahatma	6
IQ tests	3

Johnstone, Mr.	2, 8
Maurer, Robert	13
McPhee, Julian	11, 13
Mutual Ownership Development Foundation	14
Nelson, Mrs.	9
Pacific Coast Baptist Bible College	13
Pomona Valley Council of Churches	14
<i>The Sandpiper</i>	13
Schweitzer, Albert	15
Steiner, Dr.	8
Stellano, Demetrius	8
Tay, Herbert	8
Taylor, Elizabeth	13
Voorhis, Jerry Livingston (Jerry Voorhis' son)	1
Yale Hope Mission	1
<i>Yale Daily News</i>	2